

SCHOOL READINESS ACT TALKING POINTS

HOUSE
REPUBLICAN
CONFERENCE

★ GOP.GOV ★ 109TH Congress ★

DEBORAH PRYCE, CHAIRMAN

H.R. 2123 – School Readiness Act of 2005

Courtesy: House Committee on Education and the Workforce

House Republicans are dedicated to closing the readiness gap between Head Start children and their more advantaged peers when they enter kindergarten. The School Readiness Act of 2005 will close the readiness gap, address weaknesses in the Head Start financial control system, and strengthen early childhood services for disadvantaged children.

Stopping Financial Abuses and Closing the School Readiness Gap

- Since 1965, Head Start has provided comprehensive early childhood services to low-income preschool children and their families.
- These services are intended to prepare children to enter kindergarten and to improve the conditions necessary for their success in school and life. Today Head Start provides these services to nearly one million children across the United States.
- While the resources spent on Head Start have been significant, results have been sometimes mixed.
 - Studies indicate that children enrolled in Head Start make some progress, but still lag behind national norms in all aspects of school readiness. Data from the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) and the first year findings of the Head Start Impact study suggest that Head Start participants show progress on some measures after completion of a year in Head Start, but not in others, and on balance remain below the national average.
 - As many as 50,000 teachers in Head Start nationwide need better training and techniques to teach early literacy, language, and numeracy skills.
 - In 2003 and 2004, significant financial abuses were uncovered in Head Start programs across the country, calling into question whether the significant federal investment in early childhood education is reaching the children it is intended to serve. A March 2005 report from the independent Government Accountability Office (GAO) warned the financial control system in the Head Start program is flawed and is failing to prevent multi-million dollar financial abuses that cheat poor children, taxpayers, and law-abiding Head Start operators.
- Through the School Readiness Act of 2005, House Republicans are working to strengthen accountability to stop financial abuses and close the readiness gap that has persisted between Head Start students and their peers.

Strengthening the Head Start Early Childhood Program

- While the resources to fund Head Start are significant, more work is needed to achieve the ultimate goal of closing the readiness gap between Head Start children and their more advantaged peers when they enter kindergarten.
- The School Readiness Act of 2005 addresses these important issues. Approved unanimously by a vote of 48-0 by the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, the bill:
 - Creates more competition in the Head start system;
 - Emphasizes “what works” in preparing disadvantage children for school;
 - Provides better safeguards against financial abuse;
 - Improves disclosure and transparency in Head Start;
 - Creates a greater role for states in Head Start;
 - Increases Head Start integration with local school districts;
 - Improves teacher quality in Head Start;
 - Strengthens the role of parents;
 - Addresses the unique needs of children in migrant, seasonal, and Indian Head Start programs;
 - Ensures that local Head Start centers are fairly evaluated on their performance;
 - Preserves all current health and nutritional services for Head Start children; and
 - Requires no new testing.

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